AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A method of producing metal or metal alloy granules, ~~characterized in that it comprises the steps consisting in~~in the method comprising:

preparing a metal or a metal alloy having non-metallic inclusions ~~essentially~~ comprising oxides of the base metal;

pelletizing the metal or the alloy with a reducing agent in order to form the granules;

processing the granules in a vacuum so that the reducing agent reacts on the inclusions; and

eliminating a surface layer from the granules.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein ~~elimination~~ the eliminating comprises abrasion.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~, ~~characterized in that~~wherein ~~it includes~~ the eliminating includes tribofinishing the granules.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein ~~elimination~~ the eliminating is performed by means of a vibrating enclosure.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the thickness of the eliminated layer lies in the range 0.1 mm to 0.5 mm.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the metal is selected from chromium, titanium, vanadium, molybdenum, manganese, niobium, tungsten, and nickel, and the alloy comprises at least one of the above metals and/or boron.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the alloy is a ferro-alloy.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the prepara~~tioning~~ ~~step~~ makes use of an aluminothermic reaction between at least one metal oxide and divided aluminum.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 8, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the aluminothermic reaction is unbalanced due to a shortage of aluminum relative to the quantity of aluminum needed for a complete reaction so as to ensure that the metal or the alloy contains reducible non-metallic inclusions mainly constituted by inclusions of the oxide of the base metal.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1 , ~~characterized in that~~wherein after the pelletizing, the granules are baked~~, in particular~~ at a temperature ~~lying~~ in the range 200°C to 230°C.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the ~~reducing treatment~~processing the granules is performed in a vacuum oven.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein after the ~~reducing treatment~~processing the granules, the product is cooled in a neutral atmosphere.

Claim 13. (New) A method of producing metal or metal alloy granules, the method comprising:

preparing a metal or a metal alloy having non-metallic inclusions comprising oxides of the base metal;

pelletizing the metal or the alloy with a reducing agent to form the granules;

processing the granules in a vacuum so that the reducing agent reacts on the inclusions; and

eliminating a surface layer from the granules, wherein elimination is performed by means of a vibrating enclosure.

Claim 14 (New) A method of producing metal or metal alloy granules, the method comprising:

preparing a metal or a metal alloy having non-metallic inclusions comprising oxides of the base metal;

pelletizing the metal or the alloy with a reducing agent to form the granules;

processing the granules in a vacuum so that the reducing agent reacts on the inclusions; and

eliminating a surface layer from the granules, wherein the thickness of the eliminated layer is in the range of 0.1 mm to 0.5 mm.

Claim 15 (New) A method of producing metal or metal alloy granules, the method comprising:

preparing a metal or a metal alloy having non-metallic inclusions comprising oxides of the base metal;

pelletizing the metal or the alloy with a reducing agent to form the granules;

processing the granules in a vacuum so that the reducing agent reacts on the inclusions; and

eliminating a surface layer from the granules, wherein the metal is selected from chromium, titanium, vanadium, molybdenum, manganese, niobium, tungsten, and nickel, and the alloy comprises at least one of chromium, titanium, vanadium, molybdenum, manganese, niobium, tungsten, and nickel and/or boron.

Claim 16 (New) A method of producing metal alloy granules, the method comprising:

preparing a metal alloy having non-metallic inclusions comprising oxides of the base metal;

pelletizing the alloy with a reducing agent to form the granules;

processing the granules in a vacuum so that the reducing agent reacts on the inclusions; and

eliminating a surface layer from the granules, wherein the alloy is a ferro-alloy.

Claim 17 (New) A method of producing metal or metal alloy granules, the method comprising:

preparing a metal or a metal alloy having non-metallic inclusions comprising oxides of the base metal;

pelletizing the metal or the alloy with a reducing agent to form the granules;

processing the granules in a vacuum so that the reducing agent reacts on the inclusions; and

eliminating a surface layer from the granules, wherein the preparing the metal includes an aluminothermic reaction between at least one metal oxide and divided aluminum.